



Martin J. Chávez, Mayor  
October 10, 2005

Immediate Release

## City of Albuquerque

P.O. Box 1293  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87103-1293



Alfredo R. Santistevan, Director

contact:

Dr. Mark DiMenna  
873-6613 ext. 223 (office)  
263-3299 (mobile)

### **Human Plague Case Confirmed in Bernalillo County**

ALBUQUERQUE – The Albuquerque Environmental Health Department's Bio-Disease Management program has received confirmation from the New Mexico Department of Health of a human plague case in Bernalillo County. This is the fourth human case of plague in New Mexico this year, the first in Bernalillo County. The patient is a 47 year old man from the East Mountain area of the county. He is recovering at home on antibiotic therapy.

The 3 previous cases of plague this year were all from Santa Fe County, including an adult male, an adolescent male, as well as an adult female just confirmed last week.

Several animals, including 2 cats, a squirrel and a dog, as well as numerous fleas have been found to be carrying plague this year in Bernalillo County. In addition, at least 4 prairie dog colonies appear to have been wiped out by plague.

Plague is a bacterial infection, found in some animal populations in the southwest, especially in New Mexico and Colorado. Plague bacteria are transmitted to humans and other animals through the bite of infected fleas. Pets can often be exposed to plague while roaming outside. Prairie dogs, rock squirrels and other small mammals are frequently involved in plague transmission. Plague can be treated with antibiotics if detected early. Symptoms can include headache, fever, chills, vomiting, diarrhea, and painful and/or swollen lymph nodes are characteristic of infection.

The Bio-Disease Management staff recommends limiting risk of exposure to plague-carrying fleas, especially in the areas where the disease has been found in the past, in the Foothills east of Tramway, and in the East Mountains and Tijeras Canyon areas. People should avoid close contact with wild animals by not feeding, petting or otherwise approaching squirrels, prairie dogs or other small mammals. Pets should wear flea collars or be dusted frequently for fleas. Infectious fleas can jump great distances between hosts. Dead animals suspected to be victims of plague can be reported to the Bio-Disease Management Program via the 311 system.

Please contact Dr. Mark DiMenna of the Albuquerque Environmental Health Bio-Disease Management Program at 873-6613 ext. 223 (office) or 263-3299 (mobile).